

bill at this moment. We are still in morning business.

Does the Senator seek recognition in morning business?

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I would be very happy to have my remarks in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

THE ENERGY BILL

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, when we resume consideration of the energy bill later today, we will be on a revenue measure. As all of my colleagues know, the Constitution gives a special privilege to the House of Representatives by requiring all money bills to originate in the House. This represents a constraint on the Senate in terms of voting on tax issues because in order to have a vote on a tax issue that could actually become law, you have to have a vote on a bill that is already a revenue measure and has been passed by the House. So this means the bill before us, in addition to being an energy bill, becomes a very important bill because it will contain energy tax provisions, and therefore will be a revenue bill.

I have now about 15 Members of the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, who are determined to have a vote on making the death tax repeal permanent. I will not repeat the whole debate because we will have plenty of opportunity to talk about it—we have in the past and will have in the future. But we have the anomaly that the tax cut passed last year will expire in 10 years because of a budget technicality that was in place when it was adopted. And this creates the incredible anomaly that while we are phasing out the death tax now, 9 years from now it will spring back in full force and will ensure that families that worked to build up a business or a family farm would end up having to sell that business or sell that farm to give the Government 55 cents out of every dollar of its value upon the death of the people who created it before it can be passed on to their children.

We have every right, on any revenue measure, to offer any amendment we wish. That is how the rules of the Senate work. On Thursday, I had called for regular order—which brought up Senator KERRY's amendment with Senator McCain—and I offered my amendment to it. I was unaware at the time that discussions were going on as to how we were going to proceed from there. As it turned out, Senator KERRY came over and withdrew his amendment. At that point, the distinguished Democrat floor leader filled up the amendment tree by offering a second-degree amendment to the next amendment under regular order. I think there were about nine amendments that had been set aside as we went on to consider other measures.

In working with our leadership and, through their discussions, with the leadership on the Democrat side, I have now proposed in writing an agreement

whereby we would agree to forgo the ability to offer an amendment on this bill to make death tax repeal permanent, if we could have a guarantee that at some point in the future we would get such a vote. The proposal I have made is that we pull up H.R. 8, which is on the Senate Calendar. It, in fact, is a bill to repeal the death tax. I hope it will be looked at.

We feel very strongly we ought to have the right to offer this amendment. This is a revenue measure. We have no guarantee there will be another revenue measure considered by the Senate this year. I know there are people in the Finance Committee—and I am privileged to serve on that committee—who hope we will have other opportunities. But it may well be that this is the only opportunity we have this year.

As my colleagues are aware, the House of Representatives has voted to make the whole tax cut permanent. We want to have a vote on making the death tax repeal permanent. I am hoping that something can be done to accommodate us in terms of our right.

I know there are many people who want to finish this bill. There are things in the bill I am for, but I don't know of anything that is more important than making the repeal of the death tax permanent.

I wanted my colleagues to know that we do have a growing number of people who are working to achieve this goal. It would be our objective. I think there are two amendments the managers of the bill wanted to do this afternoon that we have agreed to step aside and allow them to do. But beyond that point, it would be our intent to object to bringing up new amendments or to setting aside the pending amendment until we get some agreement. We don't have to do our amendment now, but we want to be guaranteed that at some point we will have our right as Senators to offer an amendment related to making the repeal of the death tax permanent.

I came over today to simply outline that there is the beginning of a discussion on how to accommodate Senators who wish to offer this amendment. I have talked to our leader, and nothing would make me happier than to get a guarantee that we will get a vote on making repeal of the death tax permanent. In that case, we would get out of the way and allow consideration of the energy tax amendment and adopt it, perhaps on a voice vote.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. GRAMM. I am happy to yield.

Mr. REID. The majority leader and the Republican leader have spoken about this issue. The Senator has submitted to us in writing his proposal which has now been reviewed. We will do everything we can to move this bill along. We hope as to the written proposal for the unanimous consent agreement, that we can work something out on that before the end of the day.

Mr. GRAMM. I appreciate the Democrat floor leader's willingness to try to

work on this. I am very grateful. It would break a major impasse and virtually guarantee that the bill will be adopted. What we would like to do is have a vote on permanently repealing the death tax. We realize the vote might come on cloture or it might come on a point of order. But we would like to have a vote nonetheless.

I thank the Senator for his help.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. GRAMM. I would be happy to yield, but I am getting ready to give up the floor. I am happy to yield.

Mr. DURBIN. That is fine, if he is going to yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMM. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROCKEFELLER). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if I might respond very briefly to what the Senator from Texas has said, the Senator from Texas is very honest and forthright in his position. He stated in the Chamber, and it will be reflected in the RECORD, that he believes the elimination of the estate tax, the death tax, is the most important priority for this Congress when it comes to tax legislation.

I disagree. Right now, fewer than 2 percent of the estates in America pay any estate tax whatsoever. We have changed the law so even fewer will pay it in the future. What the Senator from Texas and those in support of his position are arguing for is to eliminate this estate tax for the very few remaining wealthiest people in America, and it is his belief that this is the highest tax priority for Congress. I would like to take that question to his State of Texas, let alone my State of Illinois.

I just finished a tour of Illinois, and I went to small business after small business. I asked: What is the biggest problem you are facing?

They answered: The cost of health insurance. We can't pay for health insurance for our employees, let alone for the owners of the business.

A labor union, the plumbers and pipefitters, came from Chicago last week. I asked: What is your agenda in Congress?

They said: The cost of health insurance. We can't get a penny more in our paychecks when we negotiate a contract each year with our union because all the money is going into health insurance.

So if you want to know where my highest priority is in terms of tax breaks for businesses and families across America, it doesn't start at the top with people who are worth megamillions. It starts with working families who cannot afford their health insurance.

I will say to the Senator from Texas and those supporting his position, please bring a tax bill to the floor. There are those of us who want to try some other issues that we think are much more important.

Do you know what this means if we make President Bush's tax cut permanent? It means 65 percent of all of the

tax breaks will go to people making over \$500,000 a year. That is their highest priority—people with incomes of \$500,000 a year or more.

Do you know how much of a tax break they will get if we go ahead with their proposal to make the President's tax cut permanent? It turns out to be \$39,000 a year on average for people making over a half million a year.

If you are making a half million a year, let's assume that is about \$10,000 a week, and times are tough. You are going to get \$39,000 more to deal with it. Meanwhile, the small business in southern Illinois, the small business in Humboldt Park in Chicago that can't afford to pay its health insurance premiums brings the employees in and says: We are sorry, we can't do it anymore. We can't offer you health insurance for you and your family.

Which is the greater priority in America? The people making over a half million a year who get \$39,000 more in tax cuts to put in some investment or another vacation home or a boat or a luxury car or is it more important that families across America have health insurance so they can protect themselves and their children?

While we are on the subject of children, ask those same families about the importance of the deductibility of college expenses. If you want to know a tax break people across America want, talk to any family with a new baby. They will show you the child and say: Doesn't he look like his dad or doesn't she look like her mom?

The next thing they will tell you is they better open a savings account for their college right now. Otherwise, they won't be able to pay for college education.

So if we are going to talk about priorities in tax cuts, wouldn't it be good for the first time in America to allow people to deduct the cost of college education from their taxes? Isn't that a good investment for America? I think it is a far better investment than the same people who make over a half million a year, guess what, getting another windfall check of \$39,000 from President Bush's permanent tax cut.

Incidentally, so the record is clear, that permanent tax cut of President Bush's that gives \$39,000 to the wealthiest people, for all the rest of the folks in America it is less than \$1,000 a year.

So you look at it and say, well, everything is upside down in this world if the most important thing in Congress, when it comes to taxes, happens to be the wealthiest people in America. The people I represent in Illinois—some are wealthy, but the vast majority are not—are hard working, low- and middle-income families struggling to pay for health insurance, for education, and for college expenses. Those are the people who deserve a break.

In my State, we are facing a health care crisis, and it has to do with more than just the cost of health insurance. That is a major problem, but we are also seeing a crisis that is reaching in

many different directions. Talk to folks with parents and grandparents on Medicare. Ask them what they are facing when it comes to paying for prescription drugs. The Senator from Texas wants to take what limited amount of money we might spend for tax relief and give it to people making over \$500,000 a year.

Frankly, I would like to see us also consider—in addition to the cost of health insurance—the deductibility of education expenses and prescription drug costs for the elderly in America. Do you know how much prescription drug costs went up last year in our country? It was 16 percent. Put yourself on a fixed income and in a position with a serious illness. You go to the doctor and he says: Durbin, if you want to stay out of the hospital, here is a prescription that I think will do the trick. Then you go down to the pharmacy and they say: Well, I am sorry to tell you that it will cost you \$300 to fill the prescription. Well, if you are living on \$800 or \$900 a month—and that is not uncommon if you are on Social Security—what are you going to do? Many people have to make a hard choice: Am I going to fill the prescription and figure out how to pay the rent and utilities and the other bills, or am I going to walk away from it? Which is the higher priority in America, the seniors who have to walk away from the medicine they need to survive, or people making over \$500,000 a year and to give them \$39,000 a year in tax breaks? That is what it comes down to; that is the choice we face.

You have heard the Senator from Texas make his choice very clear: The highest priority, when it comes to taxes, from his point of view, is to say that the estate tax is going to be eliminated for everybody forever. I see it differently. We can reform the estate tax and do it in a sensible way. We can protect family farmers and family-owned businesses. I will sign up for that any day. But to say we are going to give a windfall in tax breaks to the wealthiest, at the expense of the people I have described, is unfair. It is the reason there are two different political parties in this Chamber, why we need political debate. It is the reason, when we disagree, sometimes it gets to the heart of issues that make a difference to families in America.

Mr. DORGAN. I wonder if the Senator will yield for a question.

Mr. DURBIN. Yes.

Mr. DORGAN. There was a discussion earlier on the estate tax. They call it the "death tax" because the pollsters figured that politically it sounded better, but it is the estate tax. Also, the discussion about estate taxes always comes in terms of helping family farmers or small businesses. I wonder if the Senator remembers that last year, when we had this debate, I offered an amendment to the estate tax. The amendment was one to the proposal by the then-majority, who wanted to abolish the estate tax. My amendment said

I don't believe we ought to interrupt the passage of any family business from the father and mother to the descendants who want to continue to operate the business. It doesn't matter whether it is a family farm or a hardware store, and it doesn't matter how big it is. If it is a family enterprise being transferred from the parents to the children, I think it ought to be totally exempt from the estate tax. So I offered an amendment.

My amendment said that transfers of family businesses, regardless of size, to family heirs to operate shall be totally exempt from estate taxes beginning in the year 2003, and all other estates shall have a \$4 million exemption. So if you have up to \$4 million in assets, or if you are transferring a family business, you are not going to pay any estate tax at all.

Now, the estate tax provision passed by the Senate said we will begin creating larger exemptions for the transfer of family assets including a family farm or a family business so that, in 2010, there shall no longer be any tax. I said, no, if you package this by saying what you really want to do is help family farmers and family businesses, why don't you vote for my amendment and they will all be exempt next year, in 2003?

We had 43 Senators who voted for my amendment. All of those who have spent their careers in the Senate saying "we want to get rid of this burdensome death tax for family-owned businesses and family farms" voted against that amendment. So when there is a family farm or a family business that is transferred next year, and there is an estate tax applied to it, people should understand it is because the then-majority decided last year, when they wanted to ram this fiscal policy through the Senate, that they were not really quite as interested in family farms and small businesses as they were in those who have millions and billions of dollars of assets.

Incidentally, this country has one-half of the world's billionaires. Good for us and good for them. There is nothing wrong with being that successful. But if somebody in this country has \$6 billion or \$8 billion, I guarantee you a substantial amount of that has never been taxed. It represents growth appreciation on assets over time, and there is nothing at all wrong, in my judgment, in asking that at least some of that—just some of it—be put back into this country's schools, or invested in the country's kids, and in this country's future.

But that is not what the Republicans wanted to have done. They wanted, at all costs, to protect this, and they did it at the expense of having a total exemption for transfers of all family farms and all family businesses, effective immediately in 2003. That is what we could have had.

I ask the Senator from Illinois if he recalls that debate and what the real priorities were for the other side of the aisle?

Mr. DURBIN. I certainly do. The Senator is correct. After that debate, I sent a letter to the two major farm organizations in Illinois, the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union. I said: You don't have to name names, but can you give me an example of somebody who lost a family farm because of the estate tax? They could not come up with one in my State.

I readily concede that there are sacrifices that have to be made to pay the estate tax. But the doom and gloom stories we hear from them are stories you have heard over and over. With the Senator's amendment, if they were worried about family farms or family businesses, they would have jumped all over his amendment. But it is not; it is about the people who are at the highest end of the spectrum, who have an appreciation of stock, or the appreciation of some capital asset and they finally face taxation for the first time. That isn't unfair. Families and businesses across America pay their fair share of taxes. Why do we want to exempt the wealthiest in our society at the expense of tax benefits that would help with the cost of health insurance, care for the cost of college education, and deal with prescription drugs? Those are the areas I think, frankly, in which the vast majority of Americans would applaud us for dealing with the problems they face.

Mr. DORGAN. I have one additional question. We ended up with the worst of possible worlds last year. Those who said they supported a repeal of the estate taxes to help businesses and farms would not support the amendment that would have repealed it for family businesses and family farms next year. That was more than confusing.

No. 2, the bill that was finally completed said let's repeal the estate tax and we will ratchet it up until it is finally repealed in 2010. So if you are going to die, you have to die in 2010 to take full advantage of this because in 2011, the estate tax kicks back in. I think historians and policy analysts will look at that and say what on earth could they have been thinking? Who could have constructed something that bizarre?

Mr. DURBIN. I had a group in my office that does financial planning, and they said they are cautioning clients not to walk by any open windows above the fourth floor in the year 2010 because that is the year when we have the estate tax repeal and it reinstates in 2011. It is a bizarre tax policy. If you will remember correctly, we were told by the administration that went ahead with the tax break that the reason we could do that was because they projected surpluses of \$5.2 trillion over the next 10 years. And with all this money, the obvious question they asked was: Why should the Government keep the people's money? Let's give it back to them. Some us who lived through the deficit years said we should be more careful in how we make these decisions. But they went ahead and passed the tax cut.

But a year later, they said: We made a mistake; it is not going to be a \$5.2 trillion surplus over the next 10 years. It is going to be \$1.2 trillion. What happens with the \$4 trillion? Three things happened to it: The recession continued, an unexpected war took place; but for 40 percent of it, it was a direct result of that tax cut decision. That, to me, was the wrong thing to do. It is not cautious or prudent. We will pay for it if we are not careful.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was in the Chamber—I stepped out but still listened to the Senator from Illinois and the Senator from North Dakota—when the Senator from Texas spoke. I have the greatest respect for him. He has a Ph.D. in economics. I know how versed he is in economic issues, and he has a long history of being a Member of the House and Senate.

It is my understanding the Senator from Illinois was presiding when the Senator from Texas gave his remarks; is that correct?

Mr. DURBIN. That is correct.

Mr. REID. Did the Senator from Illinois hear the Senator from Texas say—and I am paraphrasing but not very much—that he believes the most important issue before the Congress today is the estate tax issue?

Mr. DURBIN. I believe that is accurate.

Mr. REID. I am sure he does not mean that, and I am sure he will let us know if I am paraphrasing him improperly. I have to think—and I would like the Senator from Illinois to acknowledge—that prescription drug benefits for seniors may be more important than repealing the estate tax or making it permanent. We have already changed it. Something dealing with the Patients' Bill of Rights would also be something we should do.

Going from one end of the spectrum where people have billions of dollars to the other end of the spectrum where people have nothing, does the Senator from Illinois think it is also important to raise the minimum wage for people who are struggling? I say to the Senator from Illinois that 60 percent—I remind the Senator, and I am sure he knows this—60 percent of the people who draw minimum wage are women, and for 40 percent of those women, that is the only money they get for themselves and their families. Speaking for myself, I am more concerned about that than whether Bill Gates is going to pay taxes when he passes away.

There are other issues, of course, that are of stronger importance to the people of Nevada than the estate tax. Last year, the people who actually paid estate taxes in Nevada were fewer in number than the fingers on your hands.

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator, he reminds me, come September we are either going to celebrate the fifth or sixth anniversary since we last increased the minimum wage to \$5.15 an

hour. Imagine what that translates into if you are working at \$5.15. Double that if you are working two jobs. Say you worked 80 hours a week at \$5.15 an hour. What a glorious life you would lead.

The Senator from Nevada comes back to the point I was trying to make earlier. Whether you are talking about the cost of health insurance, the cost of college education, prescription drugs in Medicare, or minimum wage, those issues certainly are higher priorities to this Senator and to most of the people I represent than whether or not people who are worth literally millions and millions of dollars are going to get a tax break.

The Senator from Texas is entitled to his point of view. I respect him for being very honest about it. But I hope this Senate comes down to some face-to-face votes, some real votes on real issues that mean something to families across Nevada and Illinois.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for one more point?

The Senator is aware that the majority of the Democrats in the Senate have agreed to change the estate tax to increase the amount—this is a floor, I should say. The Senator from North Dakota is in the Chamber. He offered an amendment that I supported which would have increased it, as I recall, to about \$4 million and also exempted family-owned businesses.

I think that everyone knows, hearing this colloquy among the three of us, that we support changing the estate tax. It is not as if we are totally opposed to changing it. Does the Senator from Illinois agree that we think it should be done incrementally and not eliminated completely?

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator is correct. We made that point over and over with the amendment of the Senator from North Dakota and others, that we do want to increase the exemption, which means fewer estates even than those paying today would be eligible or covered by it, and second, for family farms and family businesses.

I said to a group of small businessmen who came to visit me last week: Don't you think that is a reasonable way to go?

One of them said: No, Senator, I have to tell you, I think this is a moral issue; it's a moral issue; we should eliminate the estate tax as a moral issue.

I am not an arbiter of morality; I just ran for political office. If we are going to stack things against moral relevance, I would certainly put in that list increasing the minimum wage for millions of Americans; providing health insurance for people, 39 million who have none and more losing it every day; paying for college education expenses and prescription drugs for the elderly. Those are certainly moral issues, too, and if we are going to make a choice, the Senator from Texas made it clear what his choice would be: the estate tax.

For the rest of us, there are other issues of equal moral heft that we ought to be considering before we move to the estate tax issue. I hope we get a chance to during the course of this session. It is important during the course of this budget debate that we talk about issues that mean something to families, small businesses, and family farmers across America.

Mr. DORGAN. Will the Senator yield for one additional question?

Mr. DURBIN. I will yield.

Mr. DORGAN. I indicated to the Senator from Nevada that if there is to be a vote on the estate tax issue in the coming days—and I guess it may be with respect to the tax provisions dealing with the energy bill, I will want the opportunity to offer a second-degree amendment or at least offer essentially the same amendment we considered last year, and that amendment will draw a distinction. The distinction is this: If my amendment is adopted, then effective in 2003, no transfer or passage of any family business or family farm, regardless of size, to qualified heirs will have an estate tax obligation attached to it. None. It will be completely exempt next year.

There is nothing under the minority party's proposal that would immediately exempt family businesses from the estate tax. It will be another 7 years or so before they are totally exempt.

My amendment says, yes, let's exempt them, and do it immediately. My amendment also provides for a higher threshold exemption on all other estates. And I do not intend to agree to an unanimous consent agreement on this issue unless I have an opportunity to offer that as an amendment as well.

Warren Buffett has been here a couple of times in the last year or so to visit with us. He is the world's second richest man. He said to us: What can people be thinking about, getting rid of the estate tax? I do not support getting rid of the estate tax. This is the world's second richest man. He said you ought not do that; it does not make any sense.

Bill Gates' father came to Congress and said: Don't get rid of the estate tax completely. There are people who have billions of dollars who ought to pay some basic estate tax because they have never paid taxes on those assets, and that is the majority of those assets for the largest estates.

When they pass, obviously a significant part ought to go to their heirs, but a significant part ought to be available to invest back into this country's future, especially education, health care, and other critical areas.

I think the proper way to deal with this issue is to recognize there is merit to the question of whether we want to interrupt the transfer of a family business to other family members. The answer from us is, no, we should not interrupt that transfer. If mom and dad want to pass the business along to the kids to run, I do not care how big the

business, let's not saddle them with an estate tax obligation.

The fact is, the amendment I offered last year would have exempted all of them completely next year. We can do that. I would like an opportunity to vote on that again, if we are going to vote on exempting all estates forever from the estate tax. I think we ought to have a vote on the amendment I offered last year.

I thank the Senator for yielding.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 6 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DR. RUDOLFO ANAYA'S NATIONAL MEDAL OF ARTS AWARD

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I speak briefly today to recognize one of my State's greatest citizens—an extraordinary author whose contributions to the arts have made him known as the father of modern Chicano literature. Today Dr. Rudolfo Anaya will be 1 of 14 distinguished artists to receive this year's National Medal of Arts.

Dr. Anaya is a legend in New Mexico and throughout the Nation for writings that reflect the cultural crossings unique to the Southwest. Born in the small town of Pastura, NM, he grew up in a Spanish-speaking home rich with tradition. His family moved to Albuquerque when he was 15, where he attended high school.

His first novel, "Bless Me, Ultima," was published in 1972 and won him the prestigious Premio Quinto Sol national award for Chicano literature. This widely-acclaimed novel brought many Hispanic traditions into the limelight, creating a colorful narrative spiced with Spanish vocabulary. "Bless Me, Ultima" continues to be a best-selling Chicano work, and is used in classrooms throughout the world as a standard text for Chicano studies and literature courses.

Dr. Anaya's work combines history and tradition with the supernatural. Old Spain and New Spain, Mexico, and Mesoamerica, all come together in a style that Newsweek has referred to as "the new American writing." his second novel, "Heart of Aztlan," explores a Mexican-American family's struggle with discrimination and poverty and its determination to preserve a proud sense of cultural identity. Such themes recognize a harsh reality, while also presenting the richness of Hispanic and Native American traditions and ceremonies that are so fundamental to New Mexican culture.

Other works by Dr. Anaya include "Zia Summer," "Rio Grande Fall," "Jalanta," "Torguga," "Anaya Reader," "Albuquerque," and his most recent mystery novel, "Shaman Winter." He has also written numerous short

stories, essays, and children's books, including "Farolitos for Abuelo" and "The Farolitos of Christmas." Other distinguished awards include the PEN Center West Award for Fiction, the Before Columbus American Book Award, and the Excellence in the Humanities Award.

Dr. Anaya is a professor emeritus of English at the University of New Mexico, where he began teaching in the summer of 1974. That same year he served on the board of Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines. Both Dr. Anaya's teaching and his work build an interest and pride in New Mexican history. His unique story-telling abilities stem from the oral tradition he experienced growing up, and his desire to pass these stories down to children make him an author, a storyteller, an educator, and a role model.

As our Nation continues to explore ways to better educate our children and increase cultural awareness, we must look to role models like Dr. Anaya for guidance. His writings continue to inspire people of all ages, from all ethnic backgrounds. He has not only brought a rich tradition of story-telling and folklore to bookshelves all over the world, but he has also utilized his tremendous gift to portray the Hispanic experience. He inspires young writers to share their gifts, and he provides given millions of readers, including myself, incredible joy.

The state of New Mexico is proud to be home to such an esteemed artist—one who has brought the Southwest to the forefront of American literature. I am truly honored to congratulate Dr. Anaya for all of his accomplishments for for the distinguished National Medal of Arts award that the President will present to him this afternoon in Constitution Hall. His hard work has earned him our utmost respect and admiration. I would like to thank him personally for his outstanding contributions to the arts in America.

THE ENERGY BILL

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I will say a few words about where we find ourselves. I know we are in morning business, and that is appropriate for the various statements that have been made, but this is the beginning of week 6 in which the Senate is considering energy legislation. We are fast approaching a decisive point in that debate: Will we be able to bring this bill to an orderly close this week or will we not?

We tried before to get a finite list of amendments agreed to, and there were objections raised by some in the Senate so we were not able to do that. We also could not get any agreement, at least as yet, on tax provisions. So the majority leader has filed for cloture on the bill, and all first-degree amendments have now been submitted. That deadline was 1:30 today.

I hope we are able to deal with the remaining amendments and move forward. I hope we are able to invoke cloture so we can bring this very large